

Green Ribbon Commission: December 13 Meeting Summary

Mayor's remarks:

- Be bold; I expect your recommendations to push the envelope, politically and technically
- Need your help building support for these recommendations
- Hoping we can create a model for other cities in region and country

Co-Chairs' remarks

- Global search light is on us
- Report will be studied, downloaded, emulated, etc; it must approximate poetry

Other opening remarks

- Clarify that Commissioners are representing themselves as community leaders, and are not necessarily committing their organizations with their participation/votes
- Commission is committed to delivering a package of recommendations to the Mayor that meets or beats the Kyoto target
- Commission discussed how to reflect decision-making process -- especially in cases where there is not complete unanimity on a recommendation -- in the final report. The consensus was that the report should describe the decision-making process, including the ¾ vote rule, but should not include "minority opinions"

Stage-setting discussion

- Staff informed the Commission about new information that may allow for a refinement/improvement to the greenhouse gas emissions inventory from which we're working -- which could in turn affect our 2010 emissions projections and our target
- Commission agreed that the Metrics Committee should meet again to review the new information and make a recommendation on how to proceed

General/cross-cutting comments

- Note that benefit-cost (cost/ton) is important but not the be all/end all...Most of these are actions we are taking/should take to improve quality of life in Seattle, not just to reduce GHG; need to capture that, somehow
- On all presentations, round off the numbers
- Aim high on all recommendations...Identify the high-end of the estimates as the GHG reduction goal for that action recommendation, rather than presenting ranges, which can be confusing. Set our sights high vis-à-vis how aggressive we'll implement and therefore how many tons of GHGs we'll reduce; people will understand that we may fall short
- A different approach to the transportation and land use recommendations would be to set a policy goal to reduce X trips or VMT, and the display/assess a package of actions that can get us there
- Need to develop/recommend a process for measuring progress, determining success, reporting regularly to Mayor and community...One idea: transform the Urban Sustainability Advisory Panel into a Sustainable Development Commission (with all community leaders?); make oversight of Climate Action Plan implementation one of their key responsibilities

- Need to add a recommendation that the City provide sufficient resources for Plan implementation
- Need a more expansive recommendation or set of recommendations on reducing freight carrier emissions through efficiency improvements (e.g., freight mobility), fuel and vehicle-switching, anti-idling programs, etc.
- Develop a “parking lot” list of actions not recommended at this time

Discussions/decisions on recommendations

Fund/implement/accelerate Seattle Transit Plan (Vote: 11 of 14)

- Questions about the modeling results; concern about the apparent high cost per ton of greenhouse gas emissions reductions. Need to improve analysis (e.g., improve input into model; better quantify other (non-GHG) benefits, etc.) and/or not attempt to quantify the GHG benefits of transit, but rather include this in the report as a critical foundational piece of the strategy that has multiple benefits
- Need to embed transportation recommendations in more regional context; this is a regional issue; trying to separate out local-only emissions is problematic, e.g., smart growth could (probably will) lead to reduce regional but increased local emissions
- One member suggested removing sales tax as an example of a funding option, but consensus was to keep it on the list to be explored
- Make this a “clarion call” for more transit funding; don’t get into specifics re: funding options
- Consider appropriate mergers of transportation recommendations to account for regional nature of challenge and synergies, and to avoid double counting
- Note that other action recommendations (e.g., road pricing) could raise revenue for this transit

Increase/improve bicycling/pedestrian infrastructure (Vote: 14 of 14)

- Need to be clear about how GHG reductions estimates and cost estimates relate to each other
- Payoff here seems pretty good, but benefits and costs need to sync up; need to improve the analysis
- Switch to “complete the streets” vs. “double the bike lanes” concept/approach
- Add “impose transportation impact fees in other neighborhoods (all urban centers and urban villages?)
- Set a specific goal for sidewalk improvements/increases (e.g. increase by X blocks/year)
- Note concern about increasing bike and pedestrian activity in industrial areas
- Sidewalks are \$50,000/block not per mile

Explore/implement tolling (Vote: 14 of 14)

- Consider preferential treatment for commercial/freight
- Need to consider/manage around equity issues (i.e., disproportionate impacts on lower income communities); write up needs to emphasize this as a priority concern that must be addressed in any tolling system
- Use congestion pricing or some other term vs. tolling
- Remove specifics (e.g., 4-13 cent charge)
- Consider preferential treatment for clean cars (e.g., hybrids)

Explore/implement cordon charge (Vote: 14 of 14)

- Watch out for double-counting; are we drawing on the same people/drivers?
- Confusion re: how tolling and “fee to enter” (i.e., cordon charge) recommendations relate to each other; merge the two into comprehensive regional system/approach for congestion pricing (tolls, possible cordon charge, etc.)
- Should it be “study and develop” or “develop and implement? Consensus was to merge the recommendations on road tolling and exploration of a cordon charge, and use the language from the tolling recommendation: “Develop and lead a regional partnership to build support and implement...”
- Note that transportation choices must keep pace in order for this (and other recommendations) to work

Establish commercial parking Tax (Vote: 14 of 14)

- Include that revenues (all? some?) go to transit
- Are we overstating the benefit? Parking rates set by supply/demand; adding a tax might raise revenues and put some operators out of business, but does it really reduce VMT?
- Watch for double-counting among transportation actions

Continue/strengthen “smart” land use planning/policies (Vote: 14 of 14)

- Note that we have two Center City proposals now; Mayor’s and CM Steinbrueck’s
- Specify the high-priority zoning changes (e.g., removing parking minimums, allowing increased height and density in exchange for green building and affordable housing) in statement of recommendation
- Can we quantify the GHG benefits?
- Make NBDS stronger; get more out of it ...e.g., push for parking maximums, include all urban centers and urban villages
- Add mention of the importance of good schools to smart growth

Sustain City Light’s “no net emissions” commitment/program (Vote: 11 of 11)

Increase natural gas conservation (Vote: 13 of 13)

- Note that “achievable” is the floor, not the ceiling
- Use City’s franchise agreement with PSE to push for conservation
- Be aggressive; push to the high estimate on this and all recommendations
- Add: support PSE’s efforts to seek regulatory changes to decouple their profits and sales (which is a disincentive for conservation investments)
- Add: City will work with PSE to establish regulatory incentives and/or remove regulatory disincentives for conservation
- Ramp up the City Light-PSE partnership
- Note the huge equity benefits here (i.e., natural gas conservation saves money, especially now, and this is especially important for lower income families for whom energy costs constitute a higher percentage of their income)

Strengthen state residential energy code (Vote: 12 of 12)

- Add: require/encourage energy efficiency retrofits at point of sale to next steps
- Also recognize and reward energy efficient design/construction/operation as a non-regulatory way to promote conservation

- Note that sole focus on energy efficiency can have adverse impacts re: indoor air quality; also need to promote a more holistic approach to promote healthy buildings (including use of low- or no-emission building materials), for example the LEED program
- Make expansion/improvement of City's Sustainable Building Program a recommendation vs. on-going action
- Change to: upgrade/strengthen the state residential energy code AND allow local jurisdictions to go further still if they so choose
- Add back: establish "energy smart" type label for buildings above a certain size

Develop/implement fuel conservation program (Vote: 14 of 14)

- Benefits are well above 10,000 tons; need to better quantify/capture this
- Encourage/require "idiot light" re: tire pressure in more vehicles
- Add: continue/increase investment in transportation demand management programs
- Add: explore/develop options for reducing Port-related emissions at both seaport and airport (e.g., retiring older vehicles sooner; anti-idling; fuel-switching, etc.)
- Look at regulatory options, too, such as anti-idling at the Port or on City property – or limiting access to Port to diesel trucks of a certain age

Increase fuel efficiency of taxis (Vote: 14 of 14)

- Include alternative fuel vehicles such as CNG and E85, not just hybrids
- Note that we'll be re-convening stakeholders re: the deadheading issue
- Re-write as reducing deadheading everywhere, not just between downtown and airport...e.g., includes King County taxis too
- Can we be more aggressive and hit the whole taxi fleet, e.g., can we tighten/improve the process by which permits/medallions are bought/sold/enforced?
- Increase the estimate of GHG reductions; it's low...Calculate benefits if entire taxi fleet converted to clean cars/fuels...Consider effects of light rail to airport

Increase car-sharing (Vote: 13 of 13)

- Note that the economics of car-sharing often work, too...Not just an environmental/climate benefit
- Make sure GHG reduction estimates factor in affects of car-sharing on overall VMT
- Promote fleet-based car-sharing strategies (including rental car fleets)
- Promote building-based car-sharing strategies
- Partner with King Country Commuter Challenge
- Encourage or require car-sharing organizations to buy/use clean cars in exchange for City assistance
- City could provide assistance with marketing...But note issue re: gift of public funds to do specific signage for a specific for-profit car-sharing company
- Don't put too much effort into this recommendation, given low GHG reduction benefits

Increase use of biodiesel (Vote: 10 of 10)

- Take our "all cost-effective"...maybe use "maximize" or "optimize"
- Note "growing pains" re: quality control problems; note we'll "continue to work with X/Y/Z to evaluate/solve quality issues"
- Add support for E85 and cellulosic ethanol, and quantify the benefits
- Add support for renewable fuels standard (here or in state/regional policy recommendation)
- Add mention of CNG, especially as it relates to bus fleets; but note that this is not a big GHG reduction strategy looking ahead...

- Add an action re: promoting plug-in hybrids either here or in vehicles recommendation

State/regional climate policy principles

- Re-work language for #1, using KC's draft as starting point; long debate about whether to include specific numerical target; I believe final decision was: no
- Lots of confusion re: meaning of "binding limits"
- Mixed signals on merging #1 and #2; I believe final decision was: no
- Re-convene Policy Committee to finalize
- #3: Change to: "The State, with local regulatory bodies, should..."
- #4: Articulate this one in a stronger, more forceful way. This one is a sleeper, but big...
- #5: Re-work to focus on dire need for significantly more state funding for transportation choices (transit, bike/pedestrian infrastructure, etc.); don't be quixotic re: taking on the constitutional issue re: use of gas tax revenues, et al
- Add support for renewable fuels standard

Education/Outreach (Vote: 14 of 14)

Seattle Climate Partnership w/top 50 employers (Vote: 14 of 14)

- Target top 50, but invite all employers to participate

Mitigation and Funding (Vote: 12 of 14)

- Do not include mitigation as part of the package or in recommendations; perhaps mention why not included
- Task force will look into funding, including a specific list of promising possibilities
- Change Task Force deadline for report to August 2006

Filling the Gap

- Quantify the GHG benefits of the community mobilization strategy, but watch out for double-counting
- Add E-85 to actions and calculations
- Consider including Seattle Steam's imminent conversion to wood waste in the package
- Consider electrification of transportation
- Explore further electrification of cruise ships and terminals (though emissions reductions likely to be after 2012)
- Have the Port, PSCAA, SDOT brainstorm Port reduction strategies
- Look at mowers, boats, leaf blowers and emission
- Look again at heat pump hot water heaters by 2011
- Look again at pay-as-you-drive car insurance
- Try to model/quantify GHG reduction benefits of land use actions
- Talk about solar access zoning somewhere?!